MARVEL
25TH
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DOCTOR
STRANGE
75¢
U.K. 40p
CAN. 95¢
81
FEB
THE NEW SORCERER
SUPREME!

IN DEEP SPACE, WHERE GALAXIES ARE SMUDGED FINGERPRINTS ON THE BOWL OF NIGHT--
--WHAT HAND GUIDES THE DESTINY OF A MAN?
THE SAUCER SLIPS AT MEGALIGHT SPEEDS SILENTLY, SMOOTHLY--
--AND MOVES NOT A HAIR ON THE FLOATING BODY OF THE SORCERER SUPREME--DR. STRANGE.
THE TONGUES OF MEN AND ANGELS...!

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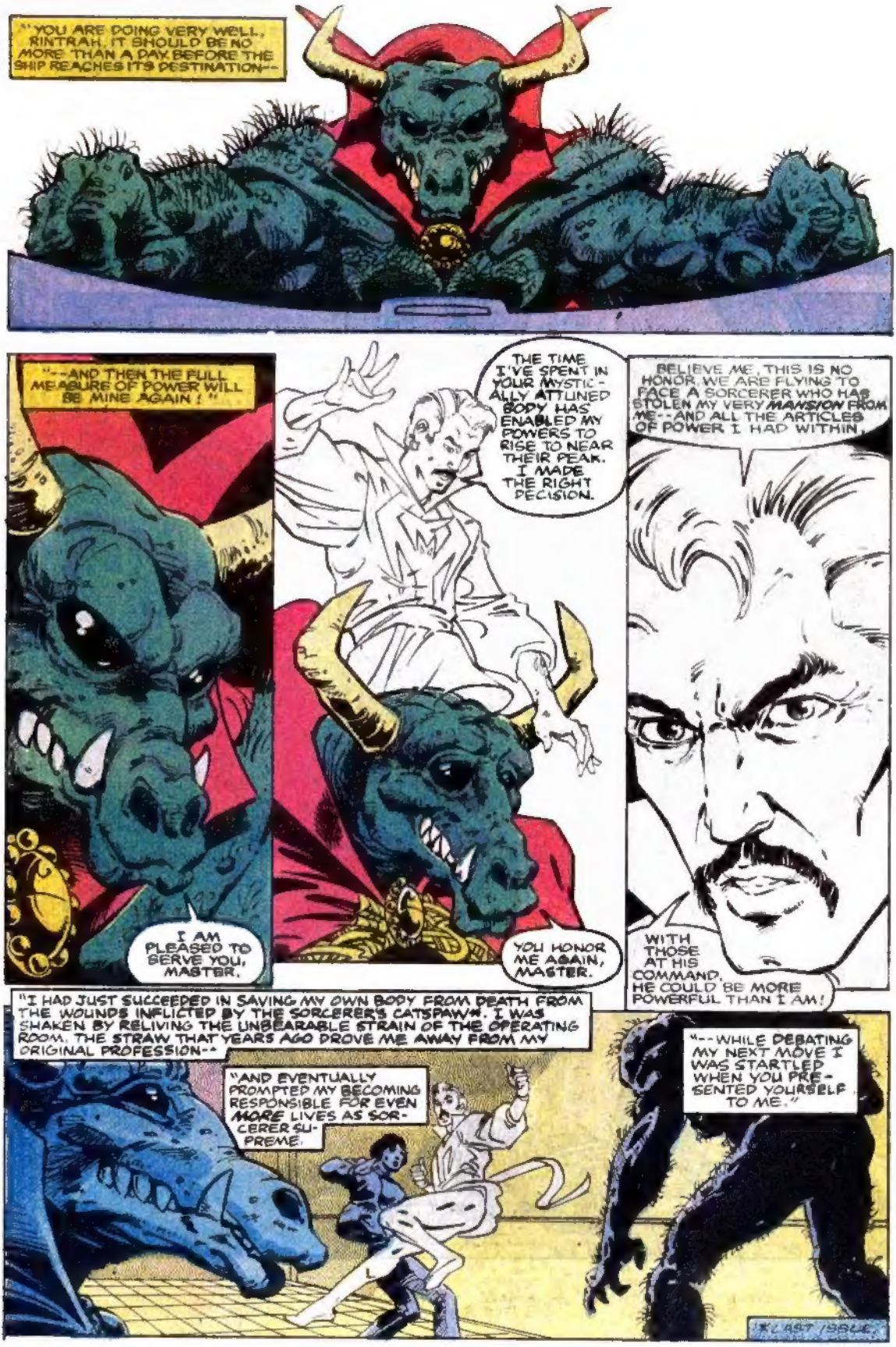
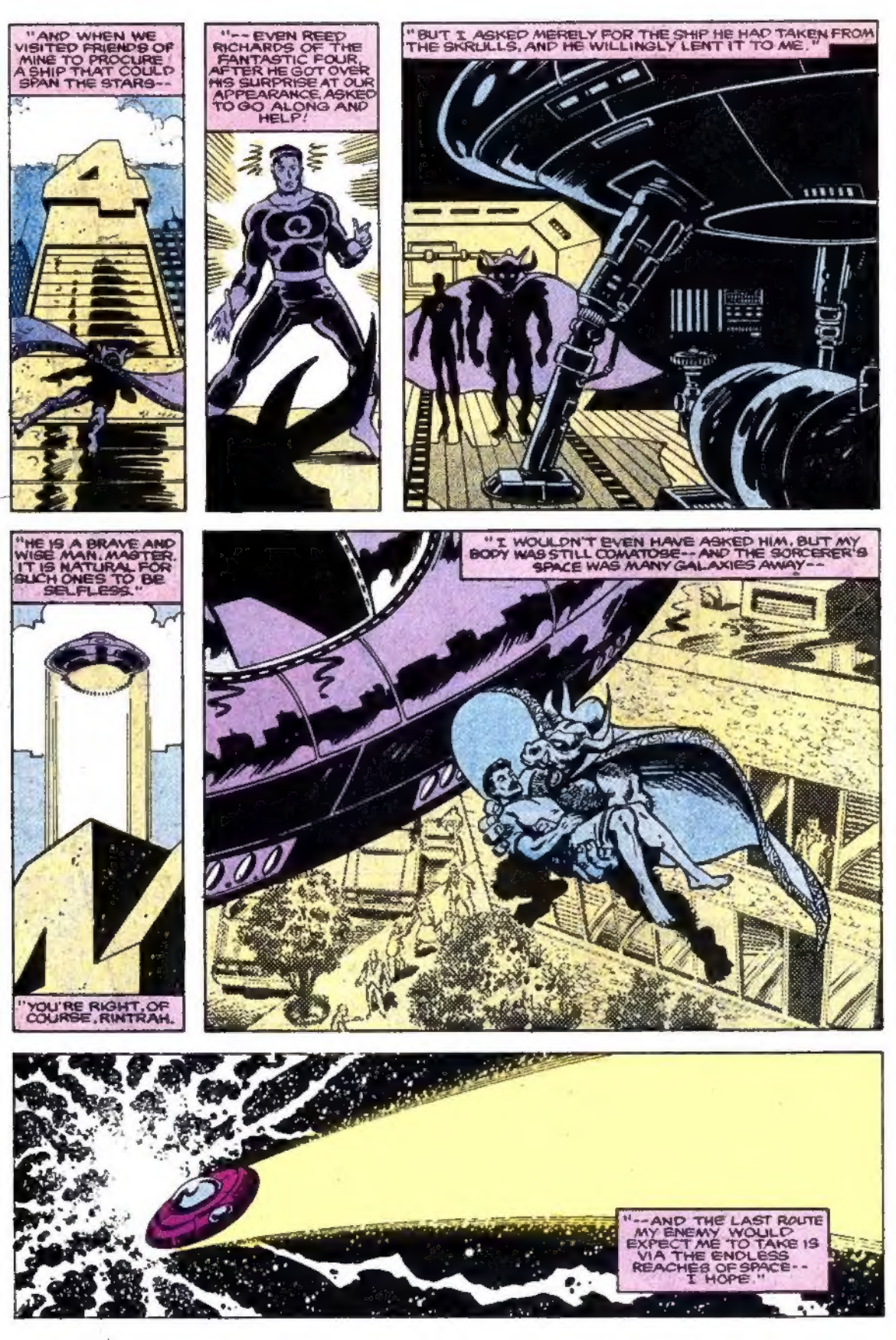
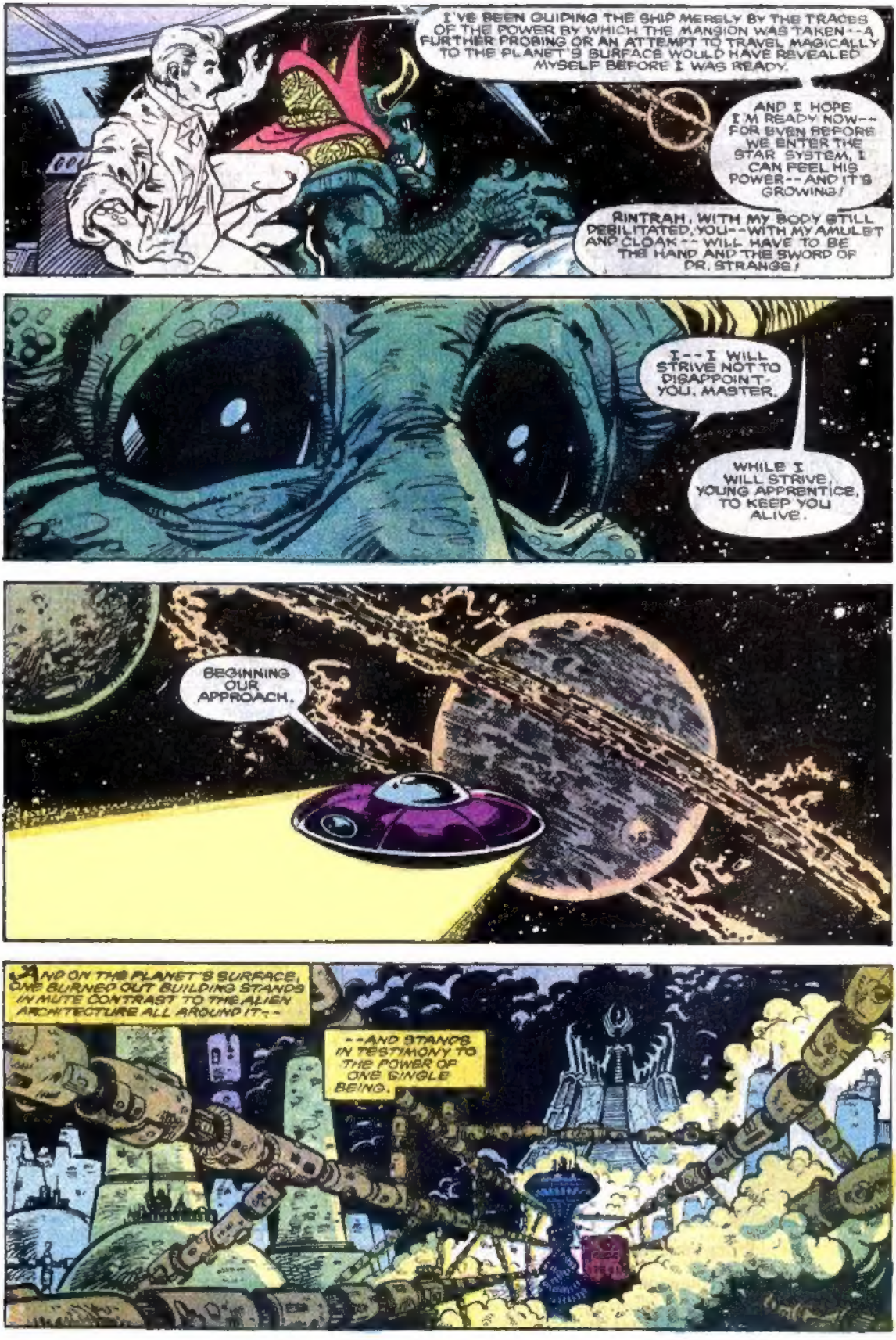
DOCTOR STRANGE Vol. 1, No. 81, February, 1987 (U.S.P.S. 426-910) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Mimi Schiffman, Vice President, Production, OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published bi-monthly. Copyright © 1986 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 75¢ per copy in the U.S. and 95¢ in Canada. Subscription rate $5.00 for 12 issues. Canada and Foreign $11.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and it is sold subject to the conditions that it may not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or mailings removed nor in any mutilated condition. DOCTOR STRANGE is a registered trademark of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO DOCTOR STRANGE, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, 10TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016

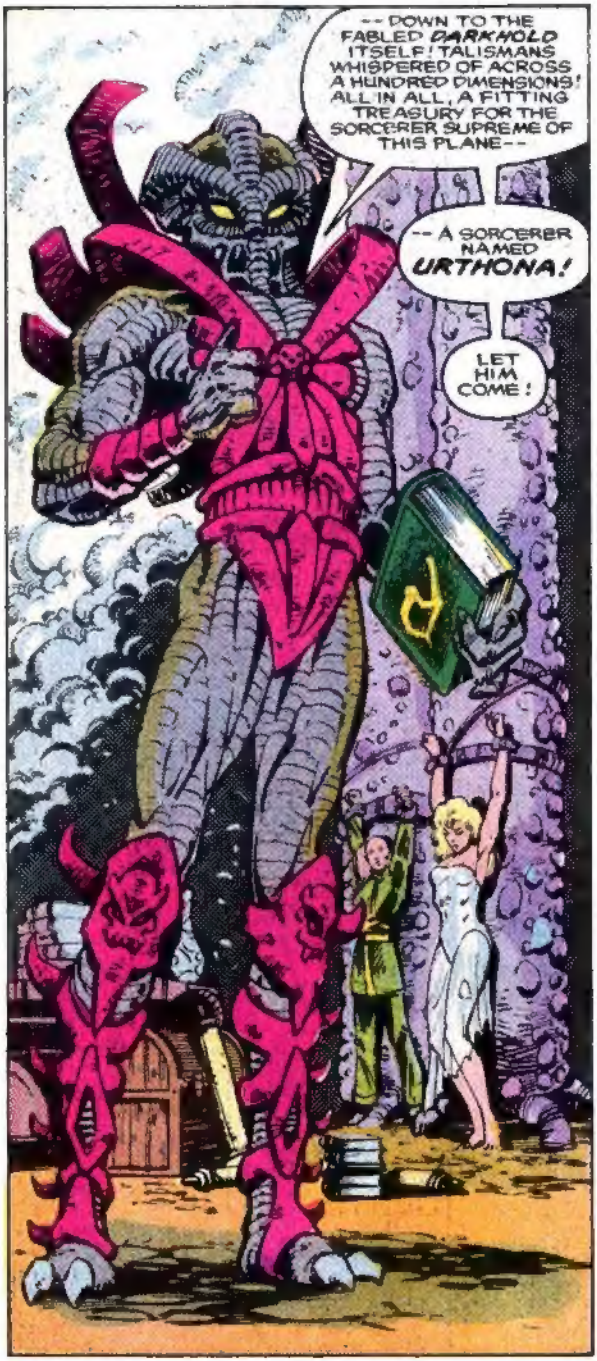

"YOU ARE DOING VERY WELL, RINTRAH. IT SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN A DAY BEFORE THE SHIP REACHES ITS DESTINATION--
"--AND THEN THE FULL MEASURE OF POWER WILL BE MINE AGAIN!"
I AM PLEASED TO SERVE YOU, MASTER.
THE TIME I'VE SPENT IN YOUR MYSTICALLY ATTUNED BODY HAS ENABLED MY POWERS TO RISE TO NEAR THEIR PEAK. I MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.
YOU HONOR ME AGAIN, MASTER.
BELIEVE ME, THIS IS NO HONOR. WE ARE FLYING TO FACE A SORCERER WHO HAS STOLEN MY VERY MANSION FROM ME--AND ALL THE ARTICLES OF POWER I HAD WITHIN.
WITH THOSE AT HIS COMMAND, HE COULD BE MORE POWERFUL THAN I AM!
"I HAD JUST SUCCEEDED IN SAVING MY OWN BODY FROM DEATH FROM THE WOUNDS INFLICTED BY THE SORCERER'S CATSPAW#. I WAS SHAKEN BY RELIVING THE UNBEARABLE STRAIN OF THE OPERATING ROOM. THE STRAW THAT YEARS AGO DROVE ME AWAY FROM MY ORIGINAL PROFESSION--
"AND EVENTUALLY PROMPTED MY BECOMING RESPONSIBLE FOR EVEN MORE LIVES AS SORCERER SUPREME.
"--WHILE DEBATING MY NEXT MOVE I WAS STARTLED WHEN YOU PRESENTED YOURSELF TO ME."
LAST ISSUE

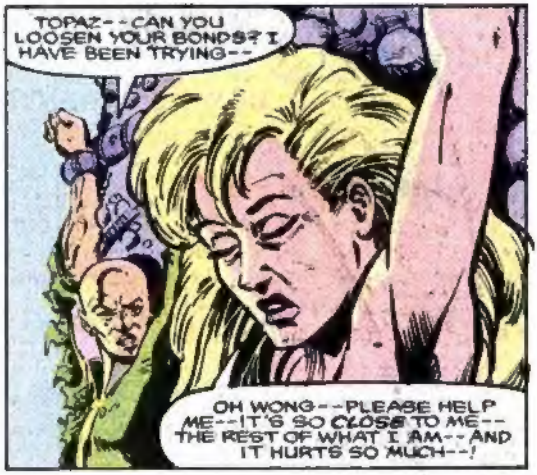
"WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU WERE THE APPRENTICE OF EN'THARMON THE WEAVER, COME TO RETURN MY REPAIRED CLOAK OF LEVITATION*, I BEGAN TO SEE THE SOLUTION.
*SEE ISSUES #776 78.
"THE APPRENTICE OF SO PUISSANT A MYSTIC WOULD SERVE WELL AS A HOST BODY FOR MY ASTRAL FORM WHILE MY PHYSICAL BODY HEALED."
"AND I WAS MORE THAN EAGER TO ACCEPT, MASTER. MY LIFE HAS BEEN SPENT LEARNING RESPECT FOR MAGI SUCH AS HE AND YOU. YOU ARE ENTRUSTED WITH PROTECTING THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE. THERE IS NO GREATER TASK."
"I TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO MY SECRETARY, SARA, WHY I WAS CHOOSING YOU INSTEAD OF HER, EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD SERVED ME WELL--"
"--BUT, LIKE YOU, SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO THINK ANYTHING OF THE DANGER INVOLVED, AND ACCUSED ME OF BETRAYING HER.
"WHY IS IT BETRAYAL TO SAVE SOMEONE FROM DANGER AND PROBABLE DEATH."
"I CANNOT SPEAK FOR OTHERS, MASTER."

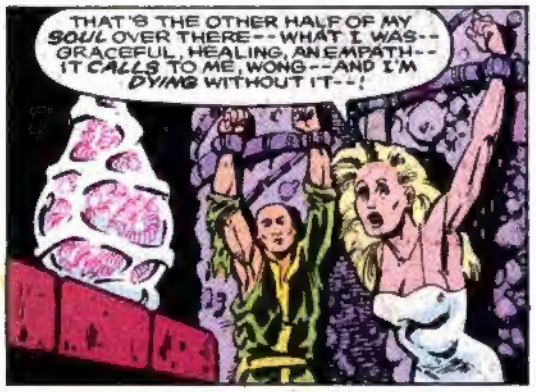

"AND WHEN WE VISITED FRIENDS OF MINE TO PROCURE A SHIP THAT COULD SPAN THE STARS--
"-- EVEN REED RICHARDS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AFTER HE GOT OVER HIS SURPRISE AT OUR APPEARANCE, ASKED TO GO ALONG AND HELP!
"BUT I ASKED MERELY FOR THE SHIP HE HAD TAKEN FROM THE SKRULLS, AND HE WILLINGLY LENT IT TO ME."
"HE IS A BRAVE AND WISE MAN, MASTER. IT IS NATURAL FOR SUCH ONES TO BE SELFLESS."
"I WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE ASKED HIM, BUT MY BODY WAS STILL COMATOSE-- AND THE SORCERER'S SPACE WAS MANY GALAXIES AWAY--
"YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE, RINTRAH.
"--AND THE LAST ROUTE MY ENEMY WOULD EXPECT ME TO TAKE IS VIA THE ENDLESS REACHES OF SPACE-- I HOPE."


I'VE BEEN GUIDING THE SHIP MERELY BY THE TRACES OF THE POWER BY WHICH THE MANSION WAS TAKEN--A FURTHER PROBING OR AN ATTEMPT TO TRAVEL MAGICALLY TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE WOULD HAVE REVEALED MYSELF BEFORE I WAS READY.
AND I HOPE I'M READY NOW--FOR EVEN BEFORE WE ENTER THE STAR SYSTEM, I CAN FEEL HIS POWER--AND IT'S GROWING!
RINTRAH, WITH MY BODY STILL DEBILITATED, YOU--WITH MY AMULET AND CLOAK--WILL HAVE TO BE THE HAND AND THE SWORD OF DR. STRANGE!
I--I WILL STRIVE NOT TO DISAPPOINT YOU, MASTER.
WHILE I WILL STRIVE, YOUNG APPRENTICE, TO KEEP YOU ALIVE.
BEGINNING OUR APPROACH.
AND ON THE PLANET'S SURFACE, ONE BURNED OUT BUILDING STANDS IN MUTE CONTRAST TO THE ALIEN ARCHITECTURE ALL AROUND IT:-
--AND STANDS IN TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF ONE SINGLE BEING.

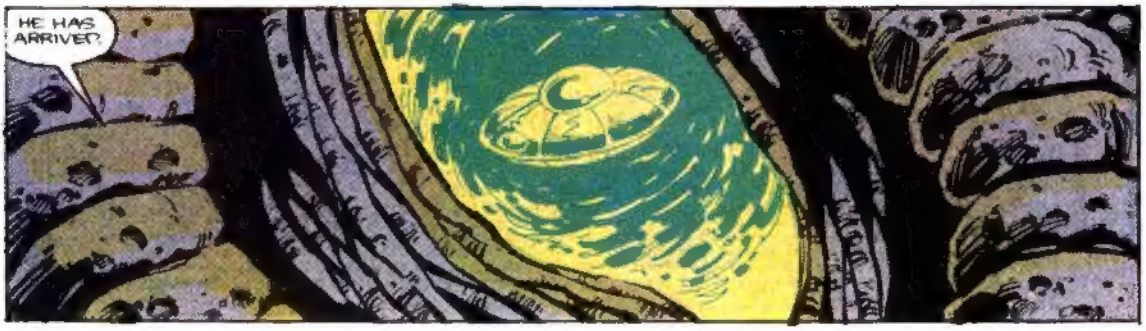
HE COMES
AS YET HE IS TOO FAR AWAY TO STRIKE AT--BUT I NEED WAIT ONLY A SHORT WHILE!
I HAVE WRUNG EVERY DROP OF MAGIC FROM HIS SANCTUM SANCTORUM AND TAKEN IT FOR MY OWN!
"HIS SLAVES AND FAMILIARS ARE NOW MY HOSTAGES--
"--AND THE PLUNDER OF THE AGES IS IN MY GRASP! THE BOOKS OF THE VISHANTI AND OF BIBON--
"--THE ORB OF AGAMOTTO HIMSELF--
"--THE TWO GEMS THAT ARE ONE, THE VEIL OF THE PURPLE DIMENSIONS, THE SCROLLS OF HOARY WATOOMB--"

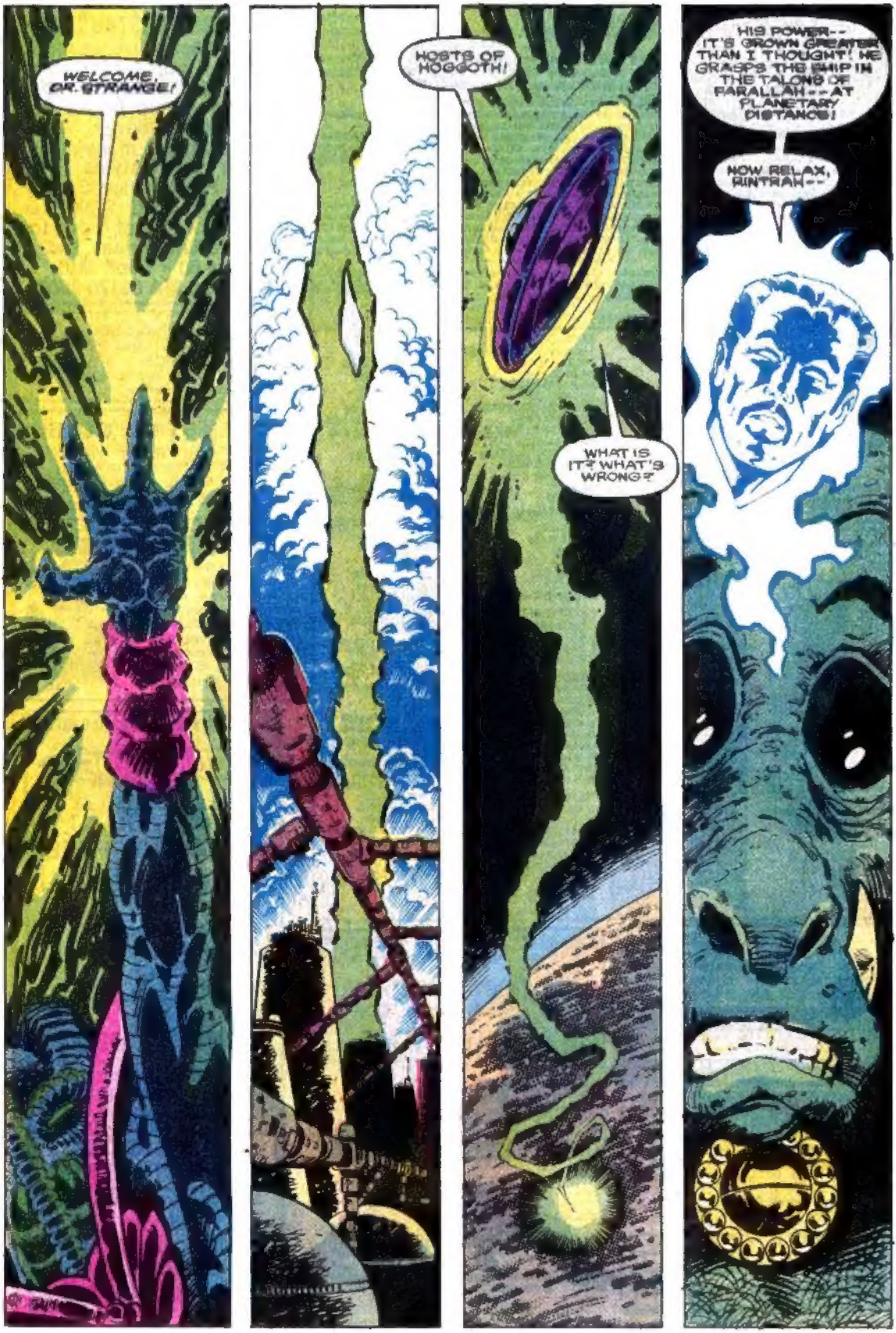

-- DOWN TO THE FABLED DARKHOLD ITSELF! TALISMANS WHISPERED OF ACROSS A HUNDRED DIMENSIONS! ALL IN ALL, A FITTING TREASURY FOR THE SORCERER SUPREME OF THIS PLANE--
-- A SORCERER NAMED URTHONA!
LET HIM COME!


TOPAZ--CAN YOU LOOSEN YOUR BONDS? I HAVE BEEN TRYING--
OH WONG--PLEASE HELP ME--IT'S SO CLOSE TO ME--THE REST OF WHAT I AM--AND IT HURTS SO MUCH--!

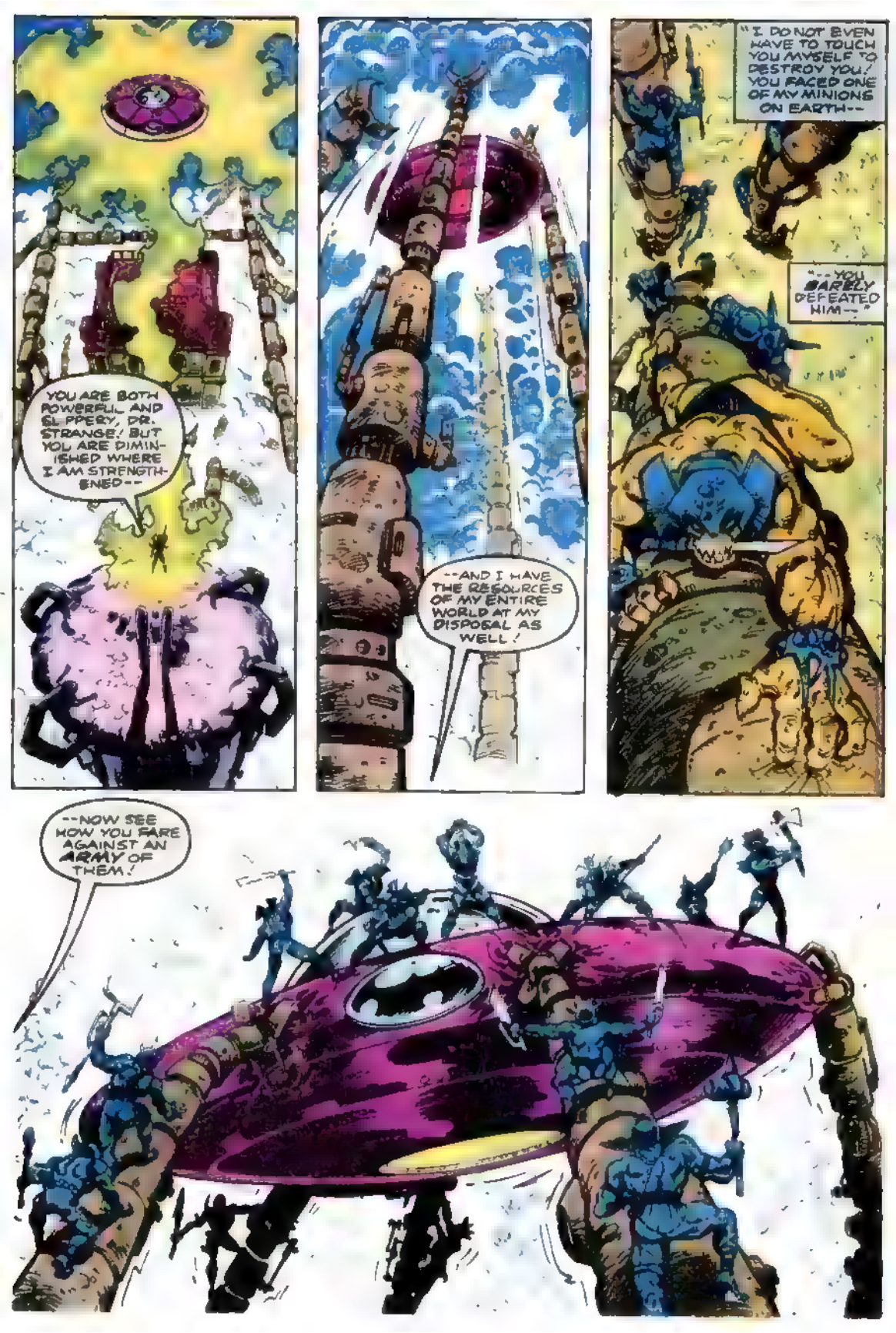

THAT'S THE OTHER HALF OF MY SOUL OVER THERE--WHAT I WAS--GRACEFUL, HEALING, AN EMPATH--IT CALLS TO ME, WONG--AND I'M DYING WITHOUT IT--!

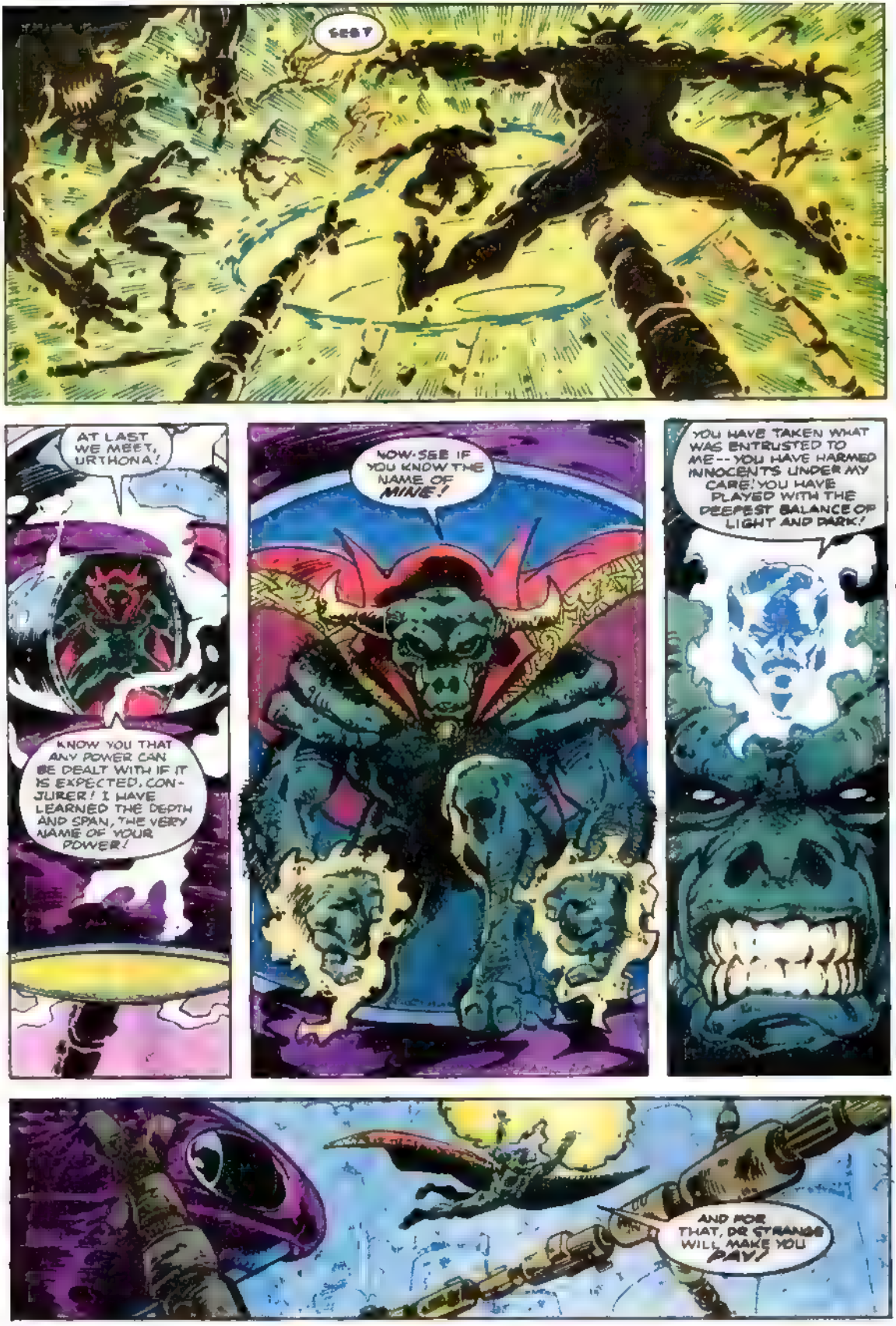
THE SERVANT OF DR. STRANGE BRIDLES AT SUCH WHINING WHEN THE WORLD STANDS IMPERILED--
--AND YET HE REALIZES THAT SHE FIGHTS A BATTLE HE HAS NEVER KNOWN--THE STRUGGLE TO BE WHOLE.

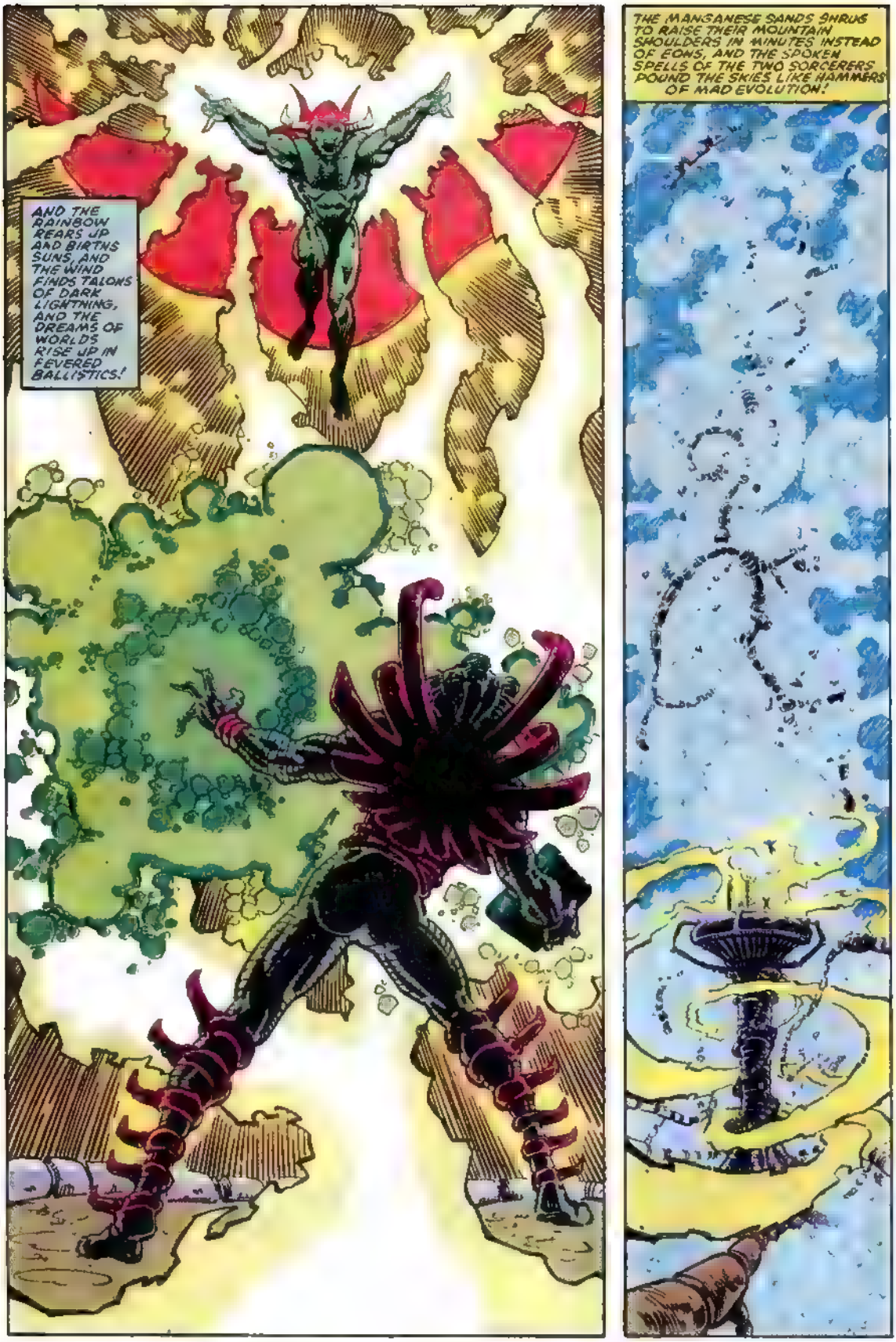

HE HAS ARRIVED?


WELCOME, DR. STRANGE!
HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?
HIS POWER-- IT'S GROWN GREATER THAN I THOUGHT! HE GRASPS THE SHIP IN THE TALONS OF RARALLAH--AT PLANETARY DISTANCE!
NOW RELAX, RINTRAH--

--AND LET THE ENEMY SEE WHAT POWER DR. STRANGE WIELDS!
WE HAVE TEMPORARILY THWARTED HIS POWER--BUT IT CONTINUES TO INCREASE!
I'VE UNDERESTIMATED HIM... IT WOULD BE FOOLISH OF ME TO EXPEND POWER AT SO GREAT A RANGE--AND IN SPACE.
RATHER, I'LL TURN HIS OWN FORCE BACK ON ITSELF--
--AND TAKE THE FIGHT TO HIM!

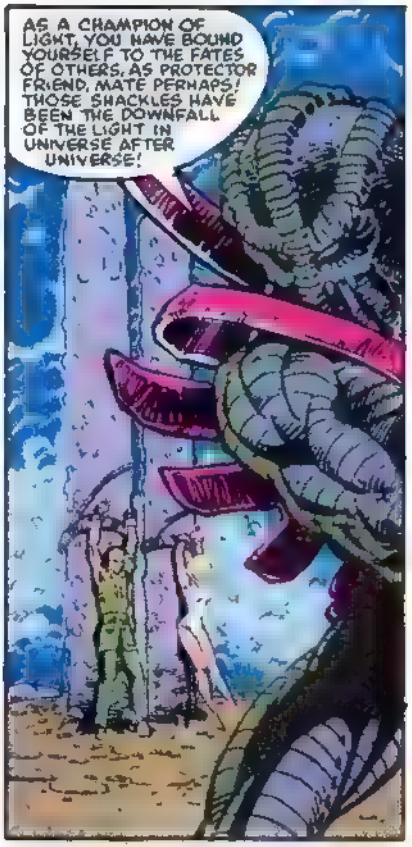

YOU ARE BOTH POWERFUL AND SLIPPERY, DR. STRANGE! BUT YOU ARE DIMINISHED WHERE I AM STRENGTHENED--
--AND I HAVE THE RESOURCES OF MY ENTIRE WORLD AT MY DISPOSAL AS WELL!
"I DO NOT EVEN HAVE TO TOUCH YOU MYSELF TO DESTROY YOU! YOU FACED ONE OF MY MINIONS ON EARTH--
"--YOU BARELY DEFEATED HIM--"
--NOW SEE HOW YOU FARE AGAINST AN ARMY OF THEM!


SEE?
AT LAST WE MEET, URTHONA!
I KNOW YOU THAT ANY POWER CAN BE DEALT WITH IF IT IS EXPECTED, CONJURER! I HAVE LEARNED THE DEPTH AND SPAN, THE VERY NAME OF YOUR POWER!
NOW SEE IF YOU KNOW THE NAME OF MINE!
YOU HAVE TAKEN WHAT WAS ENTRUSTED TO ME--YOU HAVE HARMED INNOCENTS UNDER MY CARE! YOU HAVE PLAYED WITH THE DEEPEST BALANCE OF LIGHT AND DARK!
AND FOR THAT, DR STRANGE WILL MAKE YOU PAY!


AND THE RAINBOW REARS UP AND BIRTNS SUNS, AND THE WIND FINDS TALONS OF DARK LIGHTNING, AND THE DREAMS OF WORLDS RISE UP IN FEVERED BALLISTICS!
THE MANGANESE SANDS SHRUG TO RAISE THEIR MOUNTAIN SHOULDERS IN MINUTES INSTEAD OF EONS, AND THE SPOKEN SPELLS OF THE TWO SORCERERS POUND THE SKIES LIKE HAMMERS OF MAD EVOLUTION!

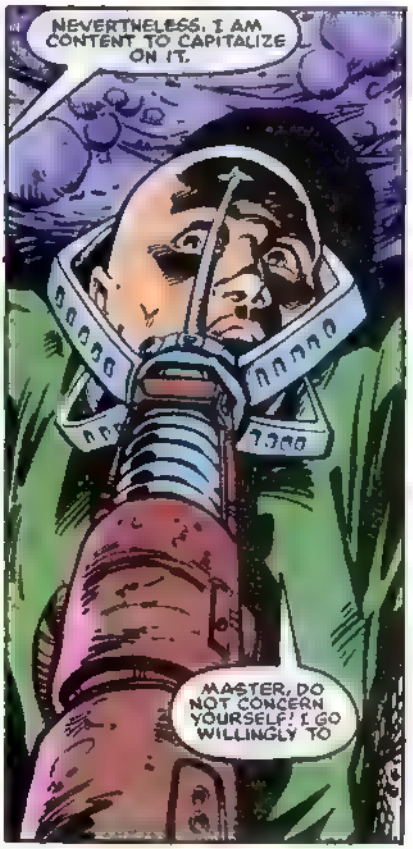
IMPRESSIVE! ON MY OWN GROUND, DENUDED OF HIS TALISMANS OF POWER-- STILL HE PRESSES ME HARD!

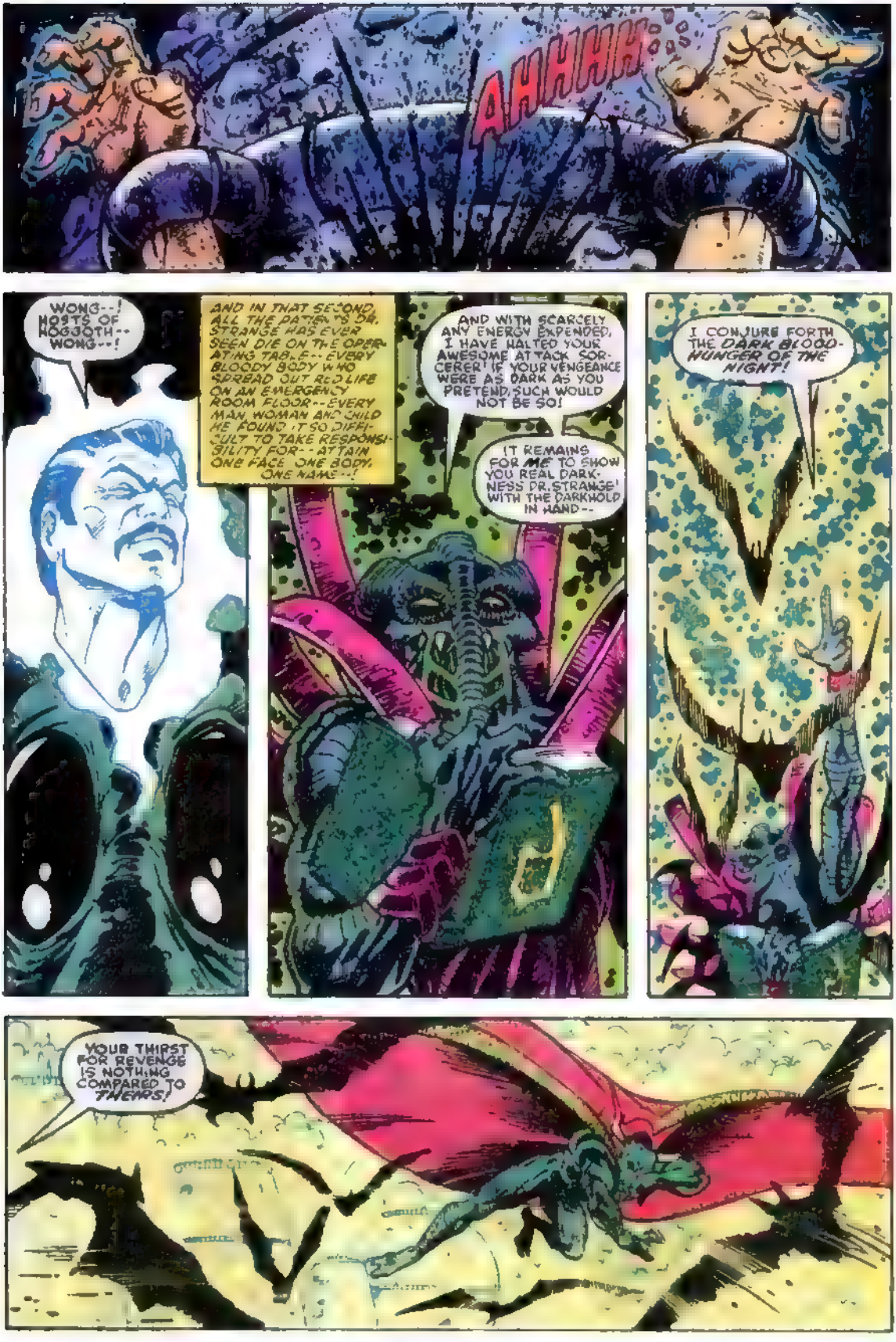
PERHAPS I WAS IN ERROR TO OSTENTATIOUSLY PULL HIM IN FROM SPACE! I AM NOT HIS MASTER YET!
BUT I HAVE MORE THAN ONE ADVANTAGE AT HAND!

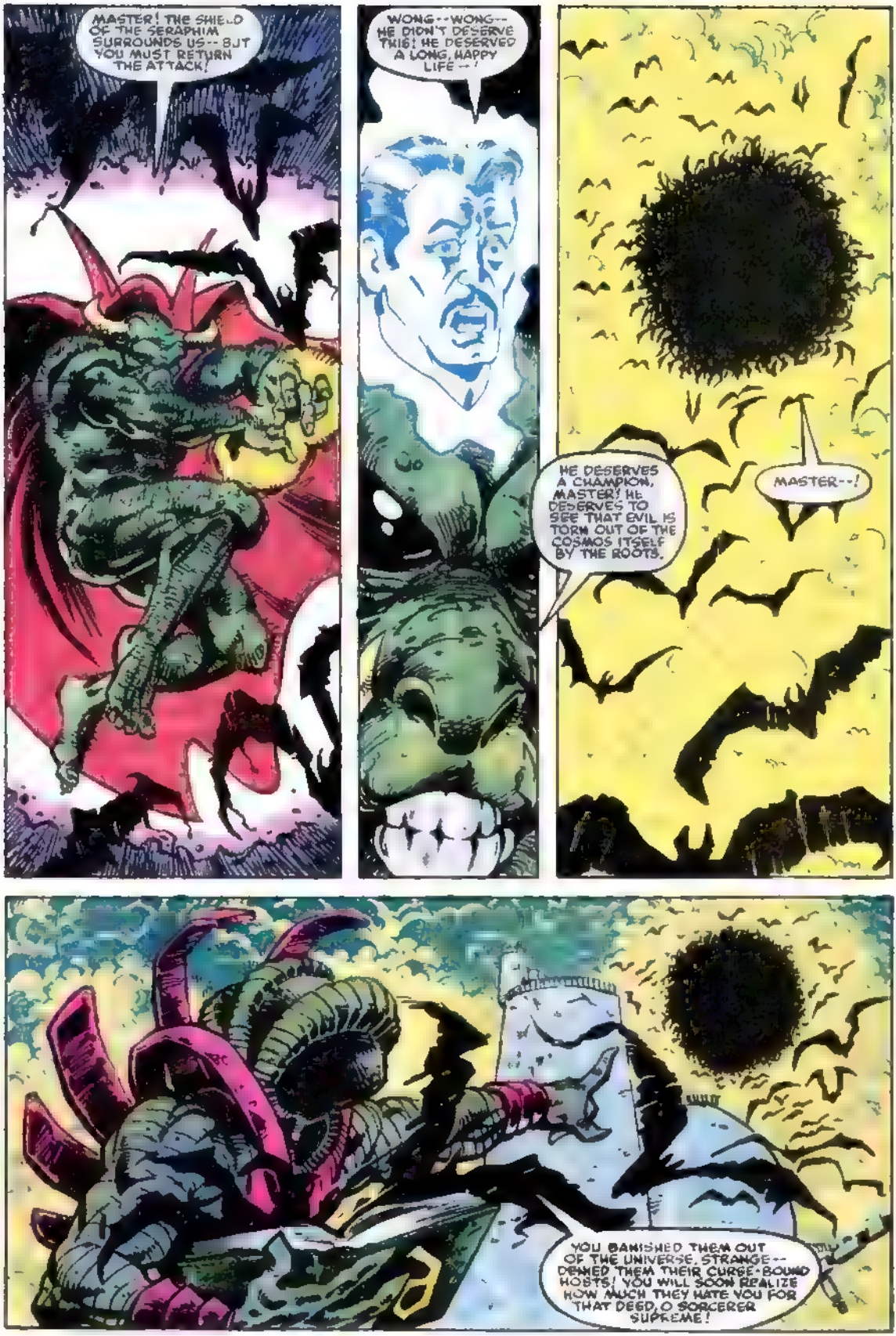

AS A CHAMPION OF LIGHT, YOU HAVE BOUND YOURSELF TO THE FATES OF OTHERS, AS PROTECTOR FRIEND, MATE PERHAPS! THOSE SHACKLES HAVE BEEN THE DOWNFALL OF THE LIGHT IN UNIVERSE AFTER UNIVERSE!

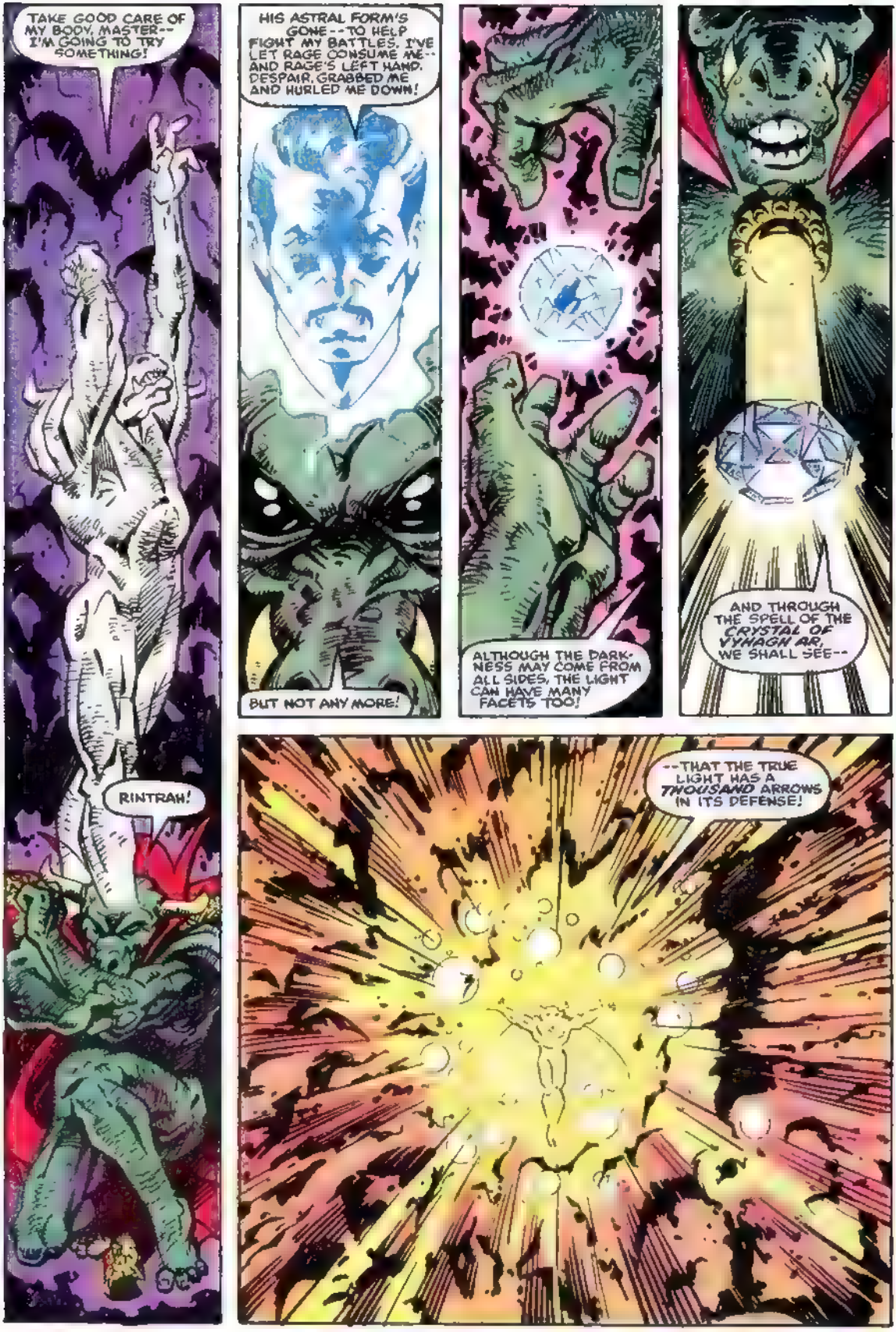
HOW YOU CAN LAY YOURSELF OPEN TO AN ATTACK SUCH AS THIS ONE IS ALMOST BEYOND MY COMPREHENSION!

WONG! NO!


NEVERTHELESS, I AM CONTENT TO CAPITALIZE ON IT.
MASTER, DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF! I GO WILLINGLY TO


AHHHH!
WONG--! HOSTS OF HOGGOTH--WONG--!
AND IN THAT SECOND, ALL THE PATHS DR. STRANGE HAS EVER SEEN DIE ON THE OPERATING TABLE--EVERY BLOODY BODY WHO SPREAD OUT RED LIFE ON AN EMERGENCY ROOM FLOOR--EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD HE FOUND IT SO DIFFICULT TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR--ATTAIN ONE FACE, ONE BODY, ONE NAME--!
AND WITH SCARCELY ANY ENERGY EXPENDED, I HAVE HALTED YOUR AWESOME ATTACK, SORCERER! IF YOUR VENGEANCE WERE AS DARK AS YOU PRETEND, SUCH WOULD NOT BE SO!
IT REMAINS FOR ME TO SHOW YOU REAL DARKNESS DR. STRANGE! WITH THE DARKHOLD IN HAND--
I CONJURE FORTH THE DARK BLOOD-HUNGER OF THE NIGHT!
YOUR THIRST FOR REVENGE IS NOTHING COMPARED TO TWENTY!

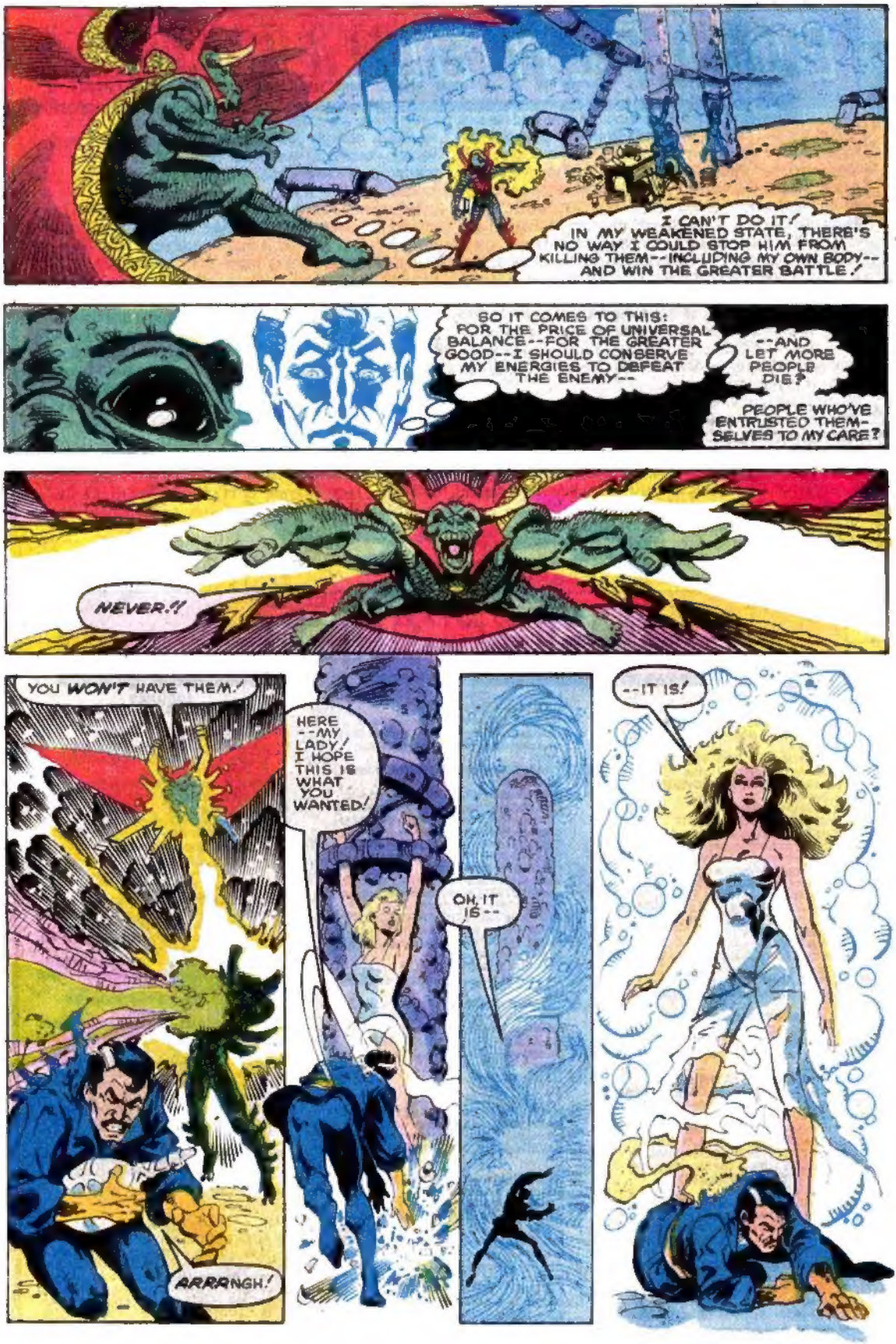

MASTER! THE SHIELD OF THE SERAPHIM SURROUNDS US--BUT YOU MUST RETURN THE ATTACK!
WONG--WONG--HE DIDN'T DESERVE THIS! HE DESERVED A LONG, HAPPY LIFE--!
HE DESERVES A CHAMPION, MASTER! HE DESERVES TO SEE THAT EVIL IS TORN OUT OF THE COSMOS ITSELF BY THE ROOTS.
MASTER--!
YOU BANISHED THEM OUT OF THE UNIVERSE, STRANGE--DENIED THEM THEIR CURSE-BOUND HOSTS! YOU WILL SOON REALIZE HOW MUCH THEY HATE YOU FOR THAT DEED, O SORCERER SUPREME!

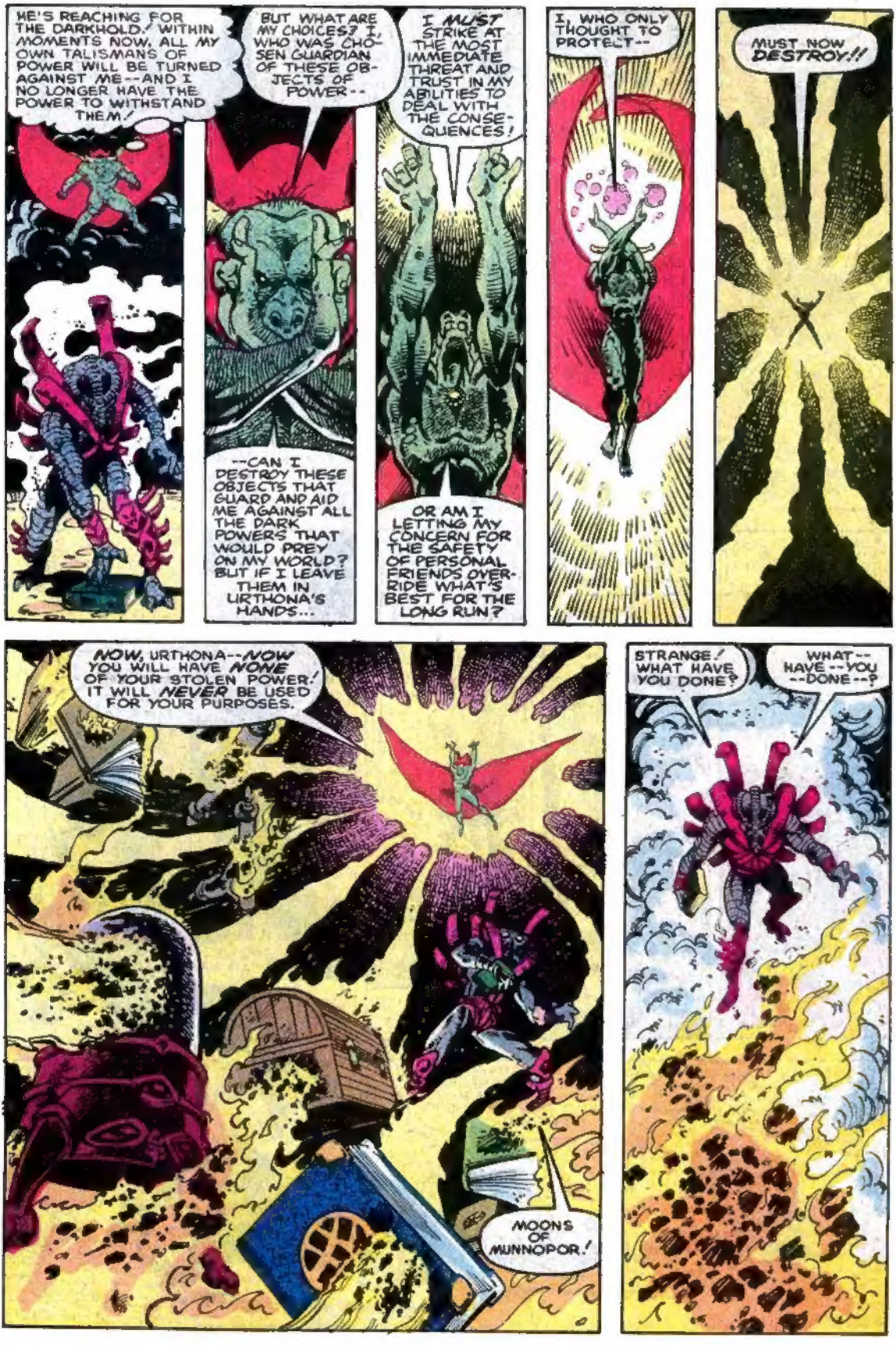

TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY BOOV, MASTER-- I'M GOING TO TRY SOMETHING!
RINTRAH!
HIS ASTRAL FORM'S GONE--TO HELP FIGHT MY BATTLES. I'VE LET RAGE CONSUME ME-- AND RAGE'S LEFT HAND, DESPAIR, GRABBED ME AND HURLED ME DOWN!
BUT NOT ANY MORE!
ALTHOUGH THE DARKNESS MAY COME FROM ALL SIDES, THE LIGHT CAN HAVE MANY FACETS TOO!
AND THROUGH THE SPELL OF THE CRYSTAL OF VYHAGH AR, WE SHALL SEE--
--THAT THE TRUE LIGHT HAS A THOUSAND ARROWS IN ITS DEFENSE!

THE MASTER IS TORN APART BY THE PLIGHT OF HIS FRIENDS--IT IS STRANGE TO SEE SOMEONE OF SO MUCH MYSTIC ABILITY BE SO-- SO PASSIONATE!
BUT THAT IS ALL THE MORE REASON WHY I SHOULD TRY TO SAVE THOSE FRIENDS!
THE MASTER'S BODY ISN'T YET STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT A MYSTIC BATTLE OF GREAT MAGNITUDE--
--BUT IT SHOULD BE WELL ENOUGH TO DO WHAT I HAVE IN MIND--
--AND DENY THE EVIL ONE THE HOLD HE HAS OVER THE GOOD ONE!
HMM--WHOA - NOT TOO STEADY ON HIS FEET YET.
BUT ENITHARMON TAUGHT ME TIME AND AGAIN THE DEEP RESOURCES THAT ARE WOVEN INTO ALL LIFE!
THE AIR ITSELF CORRODES THIS BODY'S LUNGS-- WHAT SORT OF DEMON'S WORLD IS THIS?
IT'S ALL MY MEAGER MAGIC CAN DO TO FILTER THE EVIL GASES OUT!

I HAVE BEEN TOLD TALES OF *MYSTICS* AND *HEROES*--BUT I NEVER DREAMED I WOULD BE WITNESS TO *BOTH* IN ONE BEING!
YOU--PRESS ME HARD, SORCERER! IN TRUTH, I HAD NOT THOUGHT THAT OUR UNIVERSE CONTAINED SUCH A POWER! WERE YOU ON THE RIGHT SIDE, YOU COULD GRIND THE COSMOS, BENEATH YOUR HEEL!
BUT YOU REFUSE TO USE THAT POWER --QUIBBLE ABOUT THE 'BLACK' AND THE 'WHITE' OF MAGIC--
--WHILE I HAVE NO SUCH QUALMS!

MADE IT! NOW IF I CAN JUST SNEAK UP--THANK THE NORNS THE EVIL ONE DOESN'T REALIZE THAT'S NOT THE MASTER'S OWN BODY!
STEPHEN! OH PLEASE--MY SOUL--PLEASE RESTORE MY SOUL TO ME, STEPHEN! I'M DYING--
I DON'T--I'M NOT--BUT NEVER MIND! HOW CAN I DO THAT?
IN THAT VESSEL--PLEASE--BRING IT TO ME--! PLEASE--!
ALL RIGHT--I'VE GOT IT!
BUT WE HAVE TO HURRY--!
WHAT IS THIS? WHAT IS THIS?
THIS TRICK OF YOURS WON'T WORK, STRANGE--BECAUSE THEY ALL DIE NOW!


I CAN'T DO IT! IN MY WEAKENED STATE, THERE'S NO WAY I COULD STOP HIM FROM KILLING THEM--INCLUDING MY OWN BODY--AND WIN THE GREATER BATTLE!
SO IT COMES TO THIS: FOR THE PRICE OF UNIVERSAL BALANCE--FOR THE GREATER GOOD--I SHOULD CONSERVE MY ENERGIES TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY--
--AND LET MORE PEOPLE DIE?
PEOPLE WHO'VE ENTRUSTED THEMSELVES TO MY CARE?
NEVER.!!
YOU WON'T HAVE THEM.!
ARRRNGH!
HERE--MY LADY! I HOPE THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED!
OH, IT IS--
--IT IS!


HE'S REACHING FOR THE DARKHOLD! WITHIN MOMENTS NOW, ALL MY OWN TALISMANS OF POWER WILL BE TURNED AGAINST ME--AND I NO LONGER HAVE THE POWER TO WITHSTAND THEM!
BUT WHAT ARE MY CHOICES? I, WHO WAS CHOSEN GUARDIAN OF THESE OBJECTS OF POWER--
--CAN I DESTROY THESE OBJECTS THAT GUARD AND AID ME AGAINST ALL THE DARK POWERS THAT WOULD PREY ON MY WORLD? BUT IF I LEAVE THEM IN URTHONA'S HANDS...
I MUST STRIKE AT THE MOST IMMEDIATE THREAT AND TRUST IN MY ABILITIES TO DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES!
OR AM I LETTING MY CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF PERSONAL FRIENDS OVERRIDE WHAT'S BEST FOR THE LONG RUN?
I, WHO ONLY THOUGHT TO PROTECT--
MUST NOW DESTROY!!
NOW, URTHONA--NOW YOU WILL HAVE NONE OF YOUR STOLEN POWER! IT WILL NEVER BE USED FOR YOUR PURPOSES.
MOONS OF MUNNOPOR!
STRANGE! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WHAT--HAVE--YOU --DONE--?

I'VE BEATEN YOU MONSTER!
AND YOU'LL PAY THROUGH ALL ETERNITY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
AS WILL YOU!
THE POWER OF THE DARKHOLD-- THAT EVEN YOU CANNOT DESTROY-- WILL SPIRIT ME AWAY-- BUT YOU--
YOU HAVE BROKEN THE BONDS ON A HUNDRED DARKNESSES BY YOUR VICTORY!
SEE IF YOUR MADNESS CAN DEAL WITH THEM!
RINTRAH'S BODY WILL HAVE TO REST FROM THE ENERGIES IT CARRIED--
WHILE I RETURN --THE CONQUERING HERO--HOME--!
WONG-- BY THE VISHANTI, WONG--!
HE'S ALIVE STEPHEN. WE'RE ALL ALIVE.
THEN I'VE TRIUMPHED. HA.
I'VE BROKEN EVERYTHING-- MY FRIENDS, MY VOWS--
EVERYTHING--BY FOLLOWING YOUR HEART. STEPHEN-- COME--YOU'VE MADE ME WHOLE AGAIN. YOU'VE THROWN IT ALL AWAY--FOR THE LOVE OF US. PLEASE--REST.
SLEEP, STEPHEN--SLEEP AND HEAL--AND KNOW THAT DR. STRANGE HAS STEPPED OUT OF A LONG DARKNESS--
--TOWARDS THE LIGHT.
THE END